

**H.J. No. 6**  
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**Peter J. Avoletta's personal statement.**

I became very sick during my first year at the Torrington Middle School. I remember missing a lot of time early on in the year and in particular I remember having to come in while I was sick to take a mandatory standardized test. I remember having an pneumonia, feeling very sick, weak and was hospitalized. It was very difficult as it was early in the year and everyone was becoming comfortable with meeting new people while I was just trying to get better so I too can get into the 'swing' of things. I remember feeling very fatigued all the time and had a very difficult time breathing. I was constantly congested and felt a heavy weight on my chest as it was very tight. At times, I felt dizzy. During that first month or so period, I definitely felt the sickest. When I was finally able to return to school, I remember symptoms coming on and off. I believe I missed some more time throughout 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade but it was probably not as much as I could have missed because I was always very concerned with missed time. I would push myself regardless of how I felt because I remembered how difficult it was to make up all the work I missed early on in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. I absolutely hated missing schoolwork and was obsessed with getting good grades.

When I went into the Torrington High School I remember a couple periods of time where symptoms would return and I was frequently feeling ill. I would go to school many times feeling really tired and worn down. I would say, fatigue and shortness of breath were my two main reoccurring symptoms throughout. The most vivid thing I remember is forcing myself to go to school in fear of missing any work. In time, I became accustomed to going to school while feeling "under the weather." When my doctor told me I could not attend THS in the summer following 9<sup>th</sup> grade, or any school because I was too sick, it came as a great shock and was difficult for me because I wanted to get better but at the same time, I feel I missed out on many things I should have never missed out on, including an education because the tutors had no work or limited work for me. It was detrimental socially as I formed strong friendships freshman year and was pulled out of all that. I experienced much anxiety about that. Despite getting together on weekends with friends, the strongest bonds I feel are made during interactions in school. During that sophomore year I was not the same. I was not happy at all and felt a heavy weight on my shoulders with the uncertainty that came with being taught at home. I was always worried about how it would affect my future and whether or not I would be able to recover when I finally did go back to school. I lost all motivation to work and did not feel like pushing myself to learn in the environment I was in.

Today, I am still having symptoms as far as shortness of breath goes. Whenever, I try to exercise, my hand tremors increase, also. I have failed to maintain or reach a healthy weight, which troubles me. I feel my breathing has improved over the course of these past few years however still suffers under any physical exertion even after I take albuterol, 15 mins. before I try to play basketball or do strengthening exercise. The improvement has been an extremely long frustrating process as I have been to doctor visits after doctor visits and it seems as though nothing is determined. I continue to visit two specialist often, Dr. Simkovitz for my lungs and Dr. Leibling for my blood work because of a possible autoimmune disease. I don't understand this but am told by my doctors, I will always need to follow up with them. I continue to worry about ever getting better, especially in gaining weight. I also worry if I will ever get to the point of only needing to see a doctor, maybe once a year for a regular office visit. I am so tired of fitting in doctor appointments during my time off from college.

**Peter Avoletta**